

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH THE BRUNSON FAMILY OF  
FAYETTEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA, VIA TELECONFERENCE SUBJECT: TRIBUTE TO THE 60TH  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTEGRATION OF THE ARMED FORCES TIME: 11:00 A.M. EDT DATE:  
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LIEUTENANT JENNIFER CRAGG (Office of the Secretary of Defense for  
Public Affairs): Okay. I have the -- my clock just turned to 11:00 a.m. We  
have two other callers here who were supposed to join us, but they might hop in  
at some point in the call. And hopefully they'll do that. And we'll go ahead  
and get started for now.

Again, we have this Army Bloggers Roundtable with the Brunson family.  
We are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the integration of the armed forces,  
and the Brunson family certainly has a compelling story. Six members of the  
Brunson family of Fayetteville, North Carolina, have a proud tradition of  
serving in the Army, with over 100 years of service, and that might even have  
increased since this release was put together, with a father, three sons, and  
two wives. Again, the Brunson family includes Sergeant Major (Ret.) Albert  
Brunson, Major LaHavie Brunson, Lieutenant Colonel Xavier Brunson, Captain Tavi  
Brunson, Captain Miryam Brunson, and Lieutenant Colonel Kirsten Brunson. And  
Lieutenant Colonel Kirsten Brunson has recently been selected to become the  
first African-American female judge in Army history to hold her particular  
position, and that is certainly a feat for which we are very proud of her  
accomplishment there.

So again, I will go ahead and introduce the family now, go ahead and  
let them start by letting them introduce themselves so you know who exactly is  
on the line. They will share a few comments with you and then we will open to  
your questions. So if you have any questions about the family that you'd like  
to know about their service or their story, they're open to any questions you  
might have.

So I'll go ahead and start out. Anyone in the family who wants to jump  
in, I'll let you fight it out, but go ahead and introduce yourself.

MR. : Dad?

SGT. MAJ. ALBERT BRUNSON (RET.): Yes?

MR. : Go ahead.

SGT. MAJ. BRUNSON (RET.): Good morning. My name is Al Brunson, that  
is, Sergeant Major Retired Al Brunson.

Xavier, please?

LT. COL. XAVIER BRUNSON: Okay, I'm Lieutenant Colonel Xavier Brunson. I'm the oldest son, and just want to say that in the office with me right now I have my wife Kirsten.

LT. COL. KIRSTEN BRUNSON: Hi, I'm Kirsten. I'm currently serving as a JAG officer on active duty in the Army. And also here in the office with us is Tavi.

MAJ. TAVI BRUNSON: Hi, my name is Tavi Brunson. I actually got promoted from captain to major recently, so it's actually Major Tavi Brunson.

LT. CRAGG: Oh, I'm so sorry.

MAJ. TAVI BRUNSON: That's fine, that's fine. I was happy about the promotion either way.

(Laughter.)

MAJ. TAVI BRUNSON: But yeah, I'm the middle child.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, I'll go ahead and ask the first question, just to get a start, and then we'll open to some questions from some of the callers that are on the line. It sounds like a couple of folks have joined us. I just wanted to know, if you could go down the line, if you could say what prompted your decision to join the Army and what the Army has kind of done for you as a family or as an individual? So you can go in the same order we started in. I'll start with Sergeant Major Albert Brunson.

SGT. MAJ. BRUNSON (RET.): Well, let me say I was drafted, and in fact I was drafted in June of 1965 into the Army. I was drafted out the state of Pennsylvania. And as a result of being drafted, of course, we had contests going on in South Asia at the time. And of course, I saw some action in the country of Vietnam.

(Cross talk.)

LT. COL. XAVIER BRUNSON: And for me, the reason why I served is because my father served. And it always just seemed like the most honorable profession out there. When all my buddies wanted to be doctors and lawyers, I figured I would just marry a lawyer and I could cut out the middle man. (Laughter.) All I ever really wanted to do was be a soldier and serve this great nation of ours. So it may have started with my father being drafted, but what he didn't mention to you that he went on to serve over 20 years for this nation, and served in more than one conflict. And that was what my brothers and I always thought to honor by our service.

LT. COL. KIRSTEN BRUNSON: Well, my experience is a little bit different. My father did serve in Vietnam, but by the time I was old enough to know what was going on, he was in the reserves, which I didn't really understand. It was when I was in college and I actually saw that great commercial, that "Be All That You Can Be" with the paratrooper coming out of the sky and doing more before 9:00 a.m., and for some reason that commercial got me hyped up, even though I don't really like being up before 9:00 a.m. And so I went and checked out ROTC on campus, and they had me doing things I would never

have imagined doing. I was so eager to pursue my dream of becoming a lawyer and doing that in the Army, I tell you, I've got the best clients in the world because, you know, who would you want to have as a client besides an American soldier? It doesn't get any better than that.

MAJ. TAVI BRUNSON: This is Tavi Brunson and I'm of the same ilk as my older brother. I, of course, grew up watching my father and my older brother jump out of planes and doing exciting stuff, and be a part of the 82nd Airborne Division. So growing up as a kid, you know, we'd go outside and play war and we'd want to be like our father and older brother.

That's kind of the reason why I accepted the Army. Of course, I've benefited from being with the Army the whole time, got to meet some great individuals and work with great people, and just good work. You know, wherever the Army's calling me.

MAJ. LAHAVIE BRUNSON: This is Major LaHavie Brunson, the youngest of the Brunson boys. And I'm very much the same as my two other brothers; just the opportunity to serve and follow in my father's footsteps is, you know, one of our dreams growing up. And I think it was all the better for Tavi and I because, you know, we had the opportunity to serve our first few years in the Army here, at Fort Bragg, and live, you know, near our parents and then most recently, I had the opportunity to be stationed at Fort Bragg. So it just makes it all the better and, you know, we are very blessed for that opportunity on top of the great deal that it is to serve in the United States Army.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you so much for being here, Major LaHavie Brunson. I don't think I appropriately introduced you earlier, but thank you so much for taking some time. I know you're on environmental leave right now, so if you want to go ahead and introduce yourself again and say kind of the unit you're serving with so people just know. We certainly do appreciate you taking the time to be on the line.

MAJ. LAHAVIE BRUNSON: Oh, not at all. My name is Major LaHavie Brunson. I am a quartermaster officer; I'm currently serving with the Third Armored Cavalry Regiment, and we're currently deployed in Iraq.

LT. CRAGG: Great. Well, they've had a few minutes to introduce themselves, so I think I could definitely ask them some questions. But I want to make sure that the folks we have on the line have a chance to ask questions. Does anyone out there -- I know Andrew and Lieutenant Fishman are on the line, we might have had some others join us. Are there any questions for the Brunson family?

BRYANT JORDAN: Hi, this is Bryant Jordan from military.com. Just to let you know I'm here.

LT. CRAGG: Okay.

Q And if you'll let me, I'll ask the first question. I don't know if somebody else wants to -- Q No, I'm ready. I'm just waiting for the opportunity.

Q All right, okay, Sergeant Major, before you were drafted --

Q Bryant, also, we went in order on this.

LT. COL. XAVIER BRUNSON: Oh, I'm sorry. Okay, there was a long silence; I thought nobody was coming in --

Q No, there's enough Brunsons out there; we thought you guys might have five or six more coming up any time now.

LT. COL. XAVIER BRUNSON: I think we're about complete for the time being. My sister-in-law Miryam is taking care of -- Tavi just had his first child, a daughter Olivia, so she was busy with that right now.

MR. JOINT: Is there a recruiter out there as we speak, I assume?

(Laughter.)

Q Andrew Rubin. I write for U.S. Naval Institute's magazine for savings and their website, Get the Gouge. I'd like to start my question, Sergeant Major, for you sir: We're about the same generation and I'm pleased to say I'm no longer the oldest guy on this call, but we're real close. Could you talk a little bit about the changes in the Army in race relations, as society changed too? You and I grew up watching Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, and we kind of watched it progress over the past 30-some years. Could you talk about that for a bit?

SGT. MAJ. BRUNSON (RET.): Yes, since you spoke of Martin Luther King that opened a window to allow me to speak to some of the things that I saw as a youngster. And I will tell you -- as I said, although I was drafted out of the state of Pennsylvania, my home of record, I was actually born in South Carolina. And I can remember as a youngster, before joining the military, having gone to the courthouse and in fact, the signs were there at the water fountain. It said colored and on the other side of the building, there was a water fountain for whites. I also during that time understood and knew that certain buildings that I entered there was my place to enter; well, of course, that has now changed. And I suppose for me to go back and talk about all of the changes that I have witnessed, we'd probably need a lot more than an hour.

However, what I will say, I will say that some of the changes that I witnessed in the military -- and the military, believe it or not, probably was the forefront that dealt with segregation. Now, I can recall being at Fort Bragg as a young paratrooper in the -- in 1965, and although the civilized -- the boarding act was passed in '64, please let me tell you that here in North Carolina, there were still -- you know, you knew where you belonged. For example, there were clubs here in the city of Fayetteville, where I live and reside now, you could not go in as a black person. Those barriers have been lifted now, and as we move -- as my family and I move, you know, from the United States and of course move in peace missions to Europe, we saw there was a lot less prejudice, just during the 1980s.

And what I'll do is let my sons take up and move from there because, you know, I retired in '92. But I will say for the best integration's been a great thing for the military. It allows for everyone to have an equal chair at the table, if you will.

Q Do you think it's helped -- and I'm really looking forward to listen to the lieutenant colonels and the majors -- do you think it's helped when everybody getting -- when the people read the Army, the Marine Corps and the military, with the values that you've learned or that people learned -- (inaudible). Is that carried over in that sense?

(Cross talk.)

LIEUTENANT JENNIFER CRAGG: I'm sorry. I just have to interrupt real quick. This is Lieutenant Jennifer Cragg. Lindsey, can you make the announcement with regard to having people put their mute on when someone's talking?

LT. CRAGG: I think you just did.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, good.

LT. CRAGG: If don't have your mute button pushed you need to, if you aren't talking.

(Cross talk.)

SGT. MAJ. XAVIER BRUNSON: Okay, this is Sergeant Major Brunson. To continue, you asked about a carryover from your experience in the military. I can tell you -- I worked for Cumberland County and have done so for the last 15 years -- and I can tell you that I can spot a person who served in the military because when you speak to that person, they look you in the eye. When you do a handshake, it's a very firm grip. Also, when you give that person a task and the person says, hey, I'll take care of it, it's done and you realize you don't have to go back and check. And you ask the guy, hey, you served and he says, oh yes, and the conversation goes from there. And in fact, I will tell you out here, in the civilian world, a person who served in the military is an absolutely valued asset. If I could -- and this is my military prejudice -- if I could hire all former military people, believe me, I would do it in a heartbeat.

(Cross talk.)

LT. CRAGG: Are there any other questions? Q I've got a question.

LT. CRAGG: The family want to respond to that? Okay, go ahead.

Q In a similar vein, could you talk a little bit about -- to the treatment that the dad -- well, first, thanks so much for all your service. I mean, if every family was like the Brunsons, the country would be a thousand times better.

LT. CRAGG: Is this Lieutenant Fishman? I'm sorry, can I clarify?

Q Yes, ma'am.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, thank you.

Q And so the question is based on the reception that the sergeant major had received following Vietnam, and the way the military was treated in the '70s versus the way the military is treated today, do you have any discussions about that, about the types of -- the way that the civilian world views your service back in the 1960s and '70s versus the 1990s and 2000s?

LT. COL. XAVIER BRUNSON: If I could just jump in here real quick, Daddy.

SGT. MAJ. BRUNSON (RET.): Please.

LT. COL. XAVIER BRUNSON: I know that you've kind of answered that question real well. But what I want everybody to get out of this is that we're professionals, okay. Some folks would just look at my wife Kirsten and say that she's professional because she's a lawyer, but regardless of how my father had been treated, it's like -- (chuckles) -- like so many times in history, the African American has just wanted a place at the table and has wanted to participate. If you go back to World War I and you look at the Harlem Hellcats, the reservists there, that great tradition that that unit still has today, who only want to fight. It didn't matter where they went, but they went to France and they fought, and they carried themselves as such. The nation was more important to them than anything -- than any manner of treatment.

Now you, again -- I'll mention my father was drafted, but my father served. You know, drafting only lasted for so long and after Vietnam he could have left service, but he continued to serve. And that's what my father brought home, so a lot of the values that you talk about as inculcating from our service really had their earliest roots in the love of our family and the love of this great nation. So I would just like to throw that out there to everybody and let you know that we treat this like a profession. This is our family business. Any more than the -- I wish we had more oilmen, but any more than the oil derricks that pass from family to family amongst the (icons ?) and the T. Boones, and all these folks, the Brunsons have passed on a tradition of service to this nation that -- it was all we were ever meant to do. This is our calling. From the folks we married to the things we do professionally, this is it for us. And so our treatment has always come from really looking at things through the filter of our own experiences in the Army.

And it's always been good; my father talked about us going to Europe. It was a different place for us. I can remember in '78, my brothers were very young and we took off to go to Italy, and I can remember serving there. And the only time I was struck by any former racism at all in this country or any ill treatment was always outside the little closeted community of military people because it's very much a meritocracy based on -- you know, the work that you do, the way that you carry yourself, and the way that you soldier lead to all manner of rewards. I mean, from promotions to opportunities like right now, where I'm commanding a battalion in the 82nd Airborne Division, things unheard of when my father first came to this division. But it's happening now and largely because of the opportunities the military has afforded us.

Over.

LT. CRAGG: Bryant, did you have a question?

Bryant Jordan with military.com, did you have a question? Okay, is there anybody else on the line with a question?

Q Sergeant major? Hello?

SGT. MAJ. BRUNSON (RET.): Hi, Bryant.

Q Hi, thank you all very much. I turned the mute button on when you asked as well, but I didn't realize I'd left it on.

LT. CRAGG: That's what I figured. He was obeying orders too well.

Q There you go. Again, sergeant major, you were in the Army right around the same time I enlisted. I went in around 1969. And I'm just wondering, these days, there's very often talk about restoring the draft. My own recollection of the draft in the Army, although I enlisted, is that a great -- you know, good quality people. Yet today, even among active duty people, there is the -- the draftee army is sometimes really denigrated. I was wondering what your thoughts were on this.

SGT. MAJ. BRUNSON (RET): (Break) -- doing its time. When I was drafted, I didn't question it. I was called and I served. Historically, looking back on it, the draft itself was not a fair system and was not a fair system if you looked at a person who had certain capabilities, who had some dollars, who was able to either continue in school, find a person in a political position to get them a deferment. So in a sense, no, it was not a fair system, however, with the voluntary army, as you well know now, we have a very good system.

Q I guess what I meant in terms of the quality of the soldier and the people who it concerns. I mean, I -- at soldier.com, we have anybody who comments on our stories, you'll see reams of comments whenever there's a story about the draft. And invariably, you get a lot of people, still active duty, who will just go on about the Army of the '50s and '70s, where they said that the drag was the universe.

SGT. MAJ. BRUNSON (RET): It depends on who you listen to. You will hear that the draft at one time probably cleaned out certain inner cities and sent those guys in. True or not, you know, I mean, I can't say because I was drafted, but I had nothing to measure it against to be quite frank with you.

LT. CRAGG: Great, did we have anyone else join the line since we initially started that has a question? Any other bloggers or online journalists on the line?

Q This is not --

Q I'd like to follow up.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, we'll open up to follow up because someone new is on there and wants to introduce himself. Again, be sure to state your name before you begin. I'm getting good at voice recognition, but I'm not at perfection. So introduce yourself and go ahead and ask them your follow up.

Q This Andrew Lubin again from Get the Gouge. Sergeant Major, and Brain, I'm going to be behind you, would it be back in those times probably the military was the best career opportunity for minority groups. Would you call it that today or are there more opportunities out there for society where that's affecting volunteering?

SGT. MAJ. BRUNSON: Please understand that when you were drafted, you had a two-year commitment, so if you was not dedicated to the call of that draft, where you were there for two years and you were gone, so I'm not sure.

LT. COL. KIRSTEN BRUNSON: I'd like to weigh in on that, if I could. This is Kirsten Brunson. Obviously, I can't speak for what was going on in the '60s, but today I will say that opportunities in this country have changed for all groups significantly and since the civil rights movement. So whereas in that era, there were a number of opportunities that were not available to different minority groups, the same is -- or it's not true to the same extent

today. So I believe that the Army is still a wonderful opportunity and a way to get a leg up for people in a number of groups, and not specifically minority groups, for lower income, for people from rural areas where there aren't a lot of job opportunities, for people in cities who are limited by the industry that's there, that if they don't want to do that.

I mean, the Army, or the military in general, offers a number of opportunities for people in those groups, not specifically just minorities because a larger number of minorities are going to college and getting a higher education because the socioeconomic status of minority groups has changed significantly since the '60s. I don't think it's an accurate assessment necessarily to look at it in those terms. I think it's probably better if you just look at socioeconomic groups.

You can say that the military affords a wonderful opportunity for advancement for those in lower socioeconomic groups.

SGT. MAJ. BRUNSON: I think I would add -- this is the sergeant major again -- I think I would add to that by saying that a lot of fellows who was drafted when I was drafted in '65, although they were drafted, realized that having the G.I. Bill, that in fact that they could use the G.I. Bill for a stepping stone once they completed their two-year obligation.

Q Okay, great, thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, do Lieutenant Fishman or Bryant have a question?

Q I would have a follow-up. This is Lieutenant Fishman. Sir, I was speaking a little bit earlier about aside from the racial challenges, but just the actual service, the way that the public viewed the Vietnam conflict versus the way they view the Iraq conflict, if you have discussions amongst your family about the people who served, maybe back in 2004, 2005 in Iraq versus the members who are over there now, if that situation has changed? If you're able to have discussions and say, oh, well, this is what I found over there versus this is the way things are now? That could kind of be interesting if you have any comments on that.

SGT. MAJ. BRUNSON: Sons, if one of you would speak to that and then I'll come in on the tail and throw in my comment, please?

LT. COL. XAVIER BRUNSON: This is Lieutenant Colonel Xavier Brunson. I've been in Iraq on and off since 2003 for OIF I, and I know my brothers can speak about Afghanistan. Havie can speak about Iraq now. I would tell you that there hasn't been much change. We're talking about the reaction of the public here in America. There's been no marked change in the support that the soldier feels despite what you might see in the media oftentimes by people I just kindly call pundits.

But let me just tell you that the way I feel is that you can go through an airport now, and I've seen soldiers being treated with the highest levels of respect as they wear their uniforms proudly settling from place to place. And I would just tell you that it's important to the American people is what keeps the American fighting man going, and it's just been tremendous.

Havie?



MAJ. LAHAVIE BRUNSON: Yeah, I would say too that -- this is Major LaHavie Brunson -- a lot of times they, I think the perception is that soldiers watch the news and they're affected by what the public sentiment is or the direction. But a soldier serves to serve and whatever goes on in the media or whatever else, it doesn't really affect us. It meets, from what I've seen with the Knott family, and I know the soldiers that we've all served with feel likewise that we serve to do a job and we serve for the sake of serving. And there are going to be good days and there are going to be bad guys, but in the end, we're part of the greatest fighting force in the free world. And we know that we have brethren beside us that are going to get to a victory. And it's just an honor to serve.

SGT. MAJ. BRUNSON: This is Sergeant Major Brunson again, and let me say -- and I'll take you back to Vietnam. I'll take you back when you came home, of course, there were always folks out chanting and protesting and whatever else, but inside, you were there for a cause. And whatever those folks did or did not do, did not affect you because you, if you will to use the phrase, you were on a mission and you had things to do, and even though those guys protest against you serving in the military or whatever, but it didn't affect my thoughts about the military and my commitment to this country. So for the folks who demonstrated during Vietnam, the folks who stood out when I came home from Desert Storm, or as I see it now as I welcome my sons back to the United States, there are protesters. So what? I mean, it does not affect what you have on the inside, okay?

LT. COL. XAVIER BRUNSON: I think it's easily put that regardless of what your opinions about the Vietnam War were, about having an unpopular war, I think we've been blessed for the last 20 or 30 years that we've never had an unpopular soldier. And that's what truly makes a difference. The American public appreciates the sacrifice of the soldier, regardless of the opinion of military leadership, the diplomatic and strategic fronts that are going on across the globe, the American public appreciates the sacrifice of the soldier and the work that they do.

SGT. MAJ. BRUNSON: This is Sergeant Major Brunson again, and please let me add that as an American soldier, you are not influenced or guided by those who have political views. And you're not guided by those who demonstrates or have whatever their motive may be. You do this because you love what you do.

LT. CRAGG: Great, are there any more follow-up questions?

Q Sure, Bryant Jordan, if I could ask one more question? The numbers that have come out over the last few years have shown that minorities, and blacks in particular, are enlisting in increasing numbers since 2003. And I don't know who to ask this comment on this, but is there anybody among the family that would want to comment on that?

SGT. MAJ. BRUNSON: This is the sergeant major again. What my thoughts would be, there are a lot more opportunities for young men to get involved in, so the military is just one aspect of things you can do in life. So I don't know.

LT. COL. XAVIER BRUNSON: This is Lieutenant Colonel Xavier Brunson. There are opportunities out there, and both my father and just mentioned now and my wife Kirsten mentioned, the Army, it needs to be stated, is an opportunity for folks to get a start. You know, Kirsten talked about different socioeconomic groups that find themselves able to take advantage of all that the

Army has to offer or military service has to offer. What we're seeing now is maybe the nascence of more African Americans having other choices, choices that they can get into colleges. At the same time, where you're seeing less African Americans enlisting in the Army, or coming onto active duty, you're also seeing a decline in African-American male participation at historically black colleges and universities and their enrollment therein in college in general.

So you've got to kind of look at a lot of problems that they're in. And what you really have to start thinking about is, are we availing this opportunity to folks? Are we letting them know? I'm really talking beyond the commercials about what a great opportunity this is. And I think sometimes that gets lost in when you look at the fact that there is a war going on. Folks are saying they're coming in just to fight a war.

We just -- our niece actually just enlisted in the Army, and she is currently at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, right now. And she doesn't care what's coming up. She's just happy to get into this business as well.

LT. COL. KRISTEN BRUNSON: This is Lieutenant Colonel Kirsten Brunson. And I realize I'm going to be speaking about a relatively small population. But for the last 10 years, off and on, I've done recruiting for the JAG Corps, which are the lawyers. So I have been out to law schools across the country talking to students about coming onto active duty, and also talking to some practicing attorneys. And so when you look at that group, and I would imagine some other groups like doctors, maybe chaplains, some of the other professional groups, when you're looking at those groups of people, I mean, they are weighing folks who went to law school. And it hasn't been that long in this country that African Americans were accepted into all law schools in this country.

So when you take a group like that, and they're comparing what their opportunities out there in the nation are, you know, working for these high-powered corporate law firms and making a gazillion dollars versus whether they want to come in and serve their country, you know, you've got to balance the dollars against the moral obligations. So we are still getting percentage-wise in the JAG Corps for minority groups, but specifically for African Americans, we're doing pretty well, but that's just another factor to think of. Again, it gets back to in the last 50 years the numbers of opportunities that have opened up for African Americans, that there's just more to choose from now. So the folks that are coming into the Army I think are a special breed of people because even with all of those opportunities out there, they're recognizing that serving in the United States Army is an honorable profession.

MAJ. LAHAVIE BRUNSON: And I will just add onto that. One of the things that -- this is the Major LaHavie Brunson, one of the things that I always tell my soldiers when I'm given the honor of reenlisting them, is that I am most proud of the fact that they have allowed me to participate in a ceremony whereby they're committing themselves back into service, and while our nation is at a time of war. And I think that is most telling. And the caveat -- what Kirsten said -- you know, the soldiers that join now are signing up for the possibility to go to war. And that is as great a sacrifice, in and of itself, as we can ask for these soldiers to make.

So I don't think there's any degrading in the quality of soldiers that are coming today. I think that the ones that are coming today know what they're up against. And they are -- you know, they show their metal in the fact that they commit during a time of war, and knowing that there is a potential that they will have to destroy.

SGT. MAJ. BRUNSON (RET.): This is Sergeant Major Brunson again. You speak about choices and Xavier just mentioned a niece actually that just went into -- is in basic training. Well, if you step -- if you take a look at that now, Ashley (sp) has a sister who choice to go to college, and she's -- in fact, she's graduating this month. So the opportunities are there as what track that an individual chooses to follow to get their life started.

Q Mm-hmm. So let me just throw this out to the family then. There's not a sense that the reluctance to fight the war has anything to do with it; it's that people have other priorities?

LT. COL. XAVIER BRUNSON: I would say that you could kind of go split on that. You know, what people still don't realize -- and this is Lieutenant Colonel Xavier Brunson again -- what people don't realize is that we are in a period of persistent conflict, the likes of which our nation hasn't been faced with in some time. And this will continue. Number one, people do have choices, and one of their choices is whether or not they decide to go to war for this nation. And so they have that to weigh as well as other opportunities for things that they can do. So it's kind of hard to say whether it's one way or another because there are career tracks in our Army and in the military in general that don't call you to have to go to combat. So people are just -- they're making a vote, and sometimes they're choosing to serve the Army, and sometimes they're choosing not to, and going other career paths.

Q Very good. Thank you. Thank you very much.

LT. CRAGG: Are there any other questions out there? If not, we're going to give the family a chance if they want to, I guess go around the horn, or just if anybody has any closing statements or comments they'd like to make, I'll open to that now, if there are any.

LT. COL. KIRSTEN BRUNSON: I'll go. This is Lieutenant Colonel Kirsten Brunson. Not having been born into the Brunson family -- you know, my family was not full of soldiers like this one is, it is a unique experience. It's a wonderful experience. And I can tell you that being part of a family where everybody is committed to serving their country -- and that's not just the folks in uniform. I mean, my mother-in-law works for the school system. My sister-in-law works for the city attorney's office. It is just a wonderful, wonderful thing to be surrounded by people and constantly in the company of people, and to be supported by people who all had that same commitment to their nation and to doing what's best and what's right for their nation. And that is wonderful for me, especially as Xavier and I raise our two girls to know the environment that they're coming up in. And I just wish everybody had the opportunity to be in and around the military community, and to know people like this family that I've married into.

LT. COL. XAVIER BRUNSON: And this is Lieutenant Colonel Xavier Brunson. And what I would like to throw out is, is that, you know, if you had -- get in a time machine and you would travel back some 60, 61 years, and then you came back forward to see our family serving here right now, you would just be amazed that we have made as much progress as we have, as not only a nation but as an Army. And I've just found myself to be really, really astounded by the fact that we go from a period where, you know, there were units with all-black -- (audio break) -- to now where we have integrated units, where here in my battalion, I have African-American lieutenants, I have Asian-American

lieutenants, I have Hispanic-American lieutenants, and it's just -- it's phenomenal.

And I think those her serve before the Brunsons got here, and certainly hope that one day someone might be talking during another period, maybe on the 100th anniversary of integration about the Brunsons and what we were able to bring to not only to our Army but to our nation. So I thank you all for what you do in journalism in getting this story out, but I also thank my family for all that you've done, especially you, Dad. I love you.

SGT. MAJ BRUNSON (RET.): Love you Xavier (?).

LT. CRAGG: Okay, with that, thank you so much again Brunson family, everyone for your participation. Thank you so much, Major LaHavie for being on the line even though your time back here is short. And we wish you all the best as you make the trip back. Again, just thank you so much, all of you, for your service. I think you've brought some great messages to light here about the family business you're in, as you put it, and that character of service and commitment that you all exhibit. It was a real pleasure for me to be able to be on the line for this. Thank you to those bloggers who have participated. With that, that concludes the bloggers roundtable. You can find the transcript at [defenseink.mil/blogger](http://defenseink.mil/blogger). Thank you so much, DOD, for hosting. This concludes the roundtable.

Q Thank you.

Q Bye.

Q Thank you all very much. I appreciate it.

END.